



**AARP Testimony in support of
Proposed S.B. No. 225, *AAC Appropriations for the Dial-A-Ride Program &*
Proposed S.B. No. 646, *AAC restoring funding for the state matching grant
program for demand-responsive transportation for elderly persons and persons
with disabilities.***

February 4, 2013

Transportation remains a high priority for AARP in this legislative session because mobility options are essential for seniors to remain independent and active as they age. Public transportation is not readily available to all residents in Connecticut, especially residents in less dense suburban and rural areas. The lack of transportation options often leaves older adults and people with disabilities stranded. They lose their independence and are unable to work, get to medical appointments, go shopping, and attend social events and religious activities.

Demand responsive transportation services (dial-a-ride) provide essential access to the community for people who are 60 years or older or have a disability and do not have access to public transportation. These services often mean the difference between remaining mobile and independent in their community or being institutionalized in a nursing home.

In 1999, several AARP volunteers organized to help pass CT General Statute 13b-38bb. That law directed the Commissioner of Transportation to establish a state municipal matching grant program to expand demand responsive transportation for the elderly (persons 60 and older) and people with disabilities. The proposed funding level was \$5 million when the law passed in 1999. To ensure equality for all 169 municipalities the allocation formula would be based 50% on elderly population and 50% on square mileage of a municipality. Unfortunately, Connecticut General Statute 13b-38bb wasn't implemented for over 6 years because funding had not been appropriated.

Then, in 2005 the program was finally funded with a 2-year \$10 million funding mechanism. The state funds are matched with local funds to expand transportation services. Since 2005, the municipal matching grant program has been tremendously successful at expanding dial-a-ride

and demand responsive transportation for seniors and people with disabilities. Recent cuts have required many dial-a-ride programs to cut back on services.

The municipal matching grant program helps our communities provide transportation to those, who have had to quit driving, without forcing them to give up the things they love—their mobility and independence. AARP research has shown that over half of the non-drivers over age 65 stay home on any given day. The reasons for this include their declining health, their physical limitations, and their concern over driving safely – they don't want to hurt someone – and that they have no access to transportation.

Older non-drivers are dependent on others, who may or may not be available. When they can't get out, this can lead to depression, illness and eventually to living in nursing homes. Just think, if you had to give up your own car and couldn't drive for a couple of weeks— What would you do? How would you get around? The municipal matching grant program allows towns to expand their demand responsive transportation and keep seniors active in the community.

This has been one of the most successful senior transportation programs in state history. Please restore the funding for this vital program to its \$5 million dollar a year level.

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